Tie-up with private courier companies

2501. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether India Post have made any efforts to tie-up with private courier companies to deliver courier letter to distant villages in the country;

(b) whether any such discussion had taken place;

(c) if not, the reasons for this neglect of potential business;

(d) whether it is a fact that the postal services have not shown any ability to learn from other similar Service providers in the country; and

(e) the steps proposed by Government to direct the India Post to improve its business instincts and become a self-sustaining activity?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) and (b) No, Sir.

(c) The Department of Posts has not neglected the business of delivery of letters to villages. It effects delivery of letters in practically ail the villages in India through its network of over 1.55 lakh post offices, more than 89% of which are in rural areas. Section 4 of the Indian Post Office Act, 1898 confers the exclusive privilege of collecting, carrying, sending, dispatching and delivering all letters on Department of Posts. Since any of these actions by private couriers would be *ultra vires* of the Act, the question of a tie up with couriers to deliver letters booked by them, does not arise.

(d) and (e) The Department of Posts has a keen business instinct, and has taken various measures, including tie ups with various organizations, to increase its revenue and become selft sustaining.

A number of premium mail products *viz.* Speed Post, Business Post, Express Post have been launched. Further, value additions like volume based discounts, credit facility, pick up facility etc. to meet the needs of various customer segments have been introduced. Further, under the retail post, Department is assisting many organizations like UPSC, Ministry of External Affairs, GE Money and host of others to enable customers to access their products and services through post offices.

The Department has entered into partnership with SBI Mutual Funds, PNB Mutual Fund, Prudential ICICI Mutual Fund and UTI Mutual Fund for sale of mutual fund products from Post Offices. Department has also tied up with Western Union Financial Sservices International for receiving money in India from more than 190 countries in the world. Futher, a tie up has also been a finalized with Oriental Insurance Company to dispense non-life insurance.

Development of postal communication services in backward areas

2502. PROF. M.M. AGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any proposal for expansion and development of postal communication service network in the backward districts of the country;

(b) if so, the details of such districts;

(c) the details of financial allocation made for this purpose; and

(d) the details of target set in this respect?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) and (b) Post Offices are opened subject to fulfillment of distance, population and income norms and the entire rural network is being subsidized. While there is no separate categorisation of backward districts when planning the postal network, hilly, tribal, desert and inaccessible areas are provided post offices based on population and income norms which are more liberal than those for normal rural areas; there is also flexibility to relax even the distance norm, where necessary. Details in this regard are given in the enclosed Statement (See below). Post Offices are being provided wherever justified, by redeploying existing resources, as required under the Tenth Plan.

(c) and (d) No separate targets or financial allocations have been fixed for backward districts in view of (a) and (b).